

Judy Tafoya, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Tewa (Santa Clara Pueblo) Pottery



I am half Tewa (Santa Clara Pueblo) and half Irish. My mother was full Tewa. My father was Irish. I was born in Los Angeles, California in 1962. I was raised in the pueblo, after my parents died from age 3 to 13. I lived in a group home for girls in Santa Fe from age 13 to 15. I've been on my own since I was 15 years old. I was 23 when I returned to Santa Clara Pueblo. Having made the full circle I returned to the pueblo to start another life. I rededicated my life to the Lord and married the boy next door. We were married in 1985 and started our family in 1986 with the birth of our first daughter. We have six daughters and two sons. I started making pottery in 1984. I was 24 years old. I remember making pottery figurines as a child but I don't ever remember burnishing or finishing anything. So I consider myself not only a late bloomer but also a self-taught artist. Many of my cousins who are potters were already well

established artists when I started. My sister, (Sharon Naranjo Garcia) was my closest mentor. We come from families that have been potting for generations. I am a sixth generation potter from my family.

I started with small bowls and nativity sets. Within a couple of years I was carving designs on my pots. These designs come from inside me, and the pots will show me what designs they want. My style is traditional. I work in the black deep carved style pots. I also do the red with a clay slip that when fired turns golden, which makes a beautiful contrasting color.

I have tried to walk in the footsteps of the matriarchs of pottery in that I have been creating pieces that our family is known for. The large storage pots and water jars created by different family members, most who have gone on to the afterlife, are in museums across the country.

